

**FILTER ELEMENT FOR OIL PANS AND
FILTER ELEMENT/OIL PAN COMBINATION**

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to filter elements for oil pans and to filter element/oil pan combinations. More particularly, the present invention relates to filter elements for use with oil pans and to a combination of filter elements and oil pans, which oil pans are useful for containing transmission fluid and lubricating oil associated with automotive vehicles.

Background of the Invention

Automotive devices such as transmissions, both automatic and standard which use recirculating-transmission fluid, as well as internal combustion engines which use recirculating lubricating oil, filter the fluid and oil to remove particulate contaminants therefrom. In these devices, oil drains into oil pans prior to being recirculated back through the transmission or engine. In automatic transmissions, it is a practice to use a pan-type filter with a flow tube covered by a pan/tray with the tray acting as a sump for the fluid. Some sumps have a horizontal floor and others have an inclined floor. The filter life is determined by the area of the media and by utilization of the media in a way that provides good flow characteristics.

In order to decrease the cost of transmission maintenance by protecting the quality of the oil used as transmission fluid, there is a need to increase the life of the filter media, while improving efficiency and decreasing restriction thereof.

Summary of the Invention

In view of the aforementioned considerations, it is a feature of the present invention to provide a new and improved filter element, wherein the filter element is configured for use in an oil pan useful in devices such as transmissions and internal combustion engines.

The invention is directed to a filter element used in a housing; wherein the filter element comprises a pleated filter media folded to provide upstream and downstream peaks having troughs therebetween, and wherein the filter media is mounted in a frame having side plate portions for sealing the ends of the troughs and laterally extending flanges which slope toward the filter media to direct the fluid being filtered onto the filter media.

In another aspect of the invention, the aforescribed filter element is in combination with a housing, the housing being an oil pan for transmission fluid. The housing is divided into an upper chamber and a sump with the aforescribed filter element being disposed between the upper chamber and sump.

In still another aspect of the invention, the aforescribed filter element is used in combination with a housing that forms an oil pan for lubricating oil of an internal combustion engine.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Various other features and attendant advantages of the present invention will be more fully appreciated as the same becomes better understood when considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference characters designate the same or similar parts throughout the several views, and wherein:

Figure 1 is a top perspective view of an oil pan and filter configuration constructed and arranged in accordance with the principles of the present invention;

Figure 2 is an end view of the oil pan of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a top view of the oil pan of Figures 1 and 2;

Figure 4 is a top view of a filter element used with the oil pan of Figures 1-3;

Figure 5 is a side view of the filter element of Figure 4, both side views being the same;

Figure 6 is a front view of the filter element of Figure 4, the back view being the same;

Figure 7 is an elevation taken along lines 7-7 of Figure 4;

Figure 8 is an elevation taken along lines 8-8 of Figure 4;

Figure 9 is a side view showing the filter of Figures 4-8 being inserted into the oil pan of Figures 1-3;

Figure 10 is a cross-section taken along lines 10-10 of Figure 3;

Figure 11 is a cross-section taken along lines 11-11 of Figure 3;

Figure 12 is a partial cross-section similar to Figure 10, illustrating an alternative embodiment of the invention with a sump and filter being detachable from the bottom of the oil pan; and

Figure 13 is a cross-section similar to Figure 11 of the alternative embodiment of Figure 12.

Detailed Description

Referring now to Figures 1-3, there is shown an oil pan/filter assembly 10 configured in accordance with the principles of the present invention, wherein the oil pan/filter assembly includes a housing 12 and a filter element 14. The assembly 10 of Figure 1 is configured for use with an automatic transmission; however, the same general arrangement is useable with standard transmissions, semi-automatic transmissions and any transmission where recirculated transmission fluid or oil is utilized. In addition, the housing 12 has use as an oil pan with an integral filter 14 used as an oil pan/filter assembly for internal combustion engines.

The housing 12 comprises an upper chamber 16 having a laterally projecting mounting flange 18 disposed therearound. The laterally projecting mounting flange 18 has a plurality of bolt holes 20 therein for securing the housing to the bottom of an automatic transmission housing (not shown). A groove 21 is formed in the flange 18, the groove having a gasket 22 received therein for sealing with the transmission

housing (not shown). In operation, oil enters the upper chamber 16 through an inlet (not shown) and is recirculated by a return pipe 24 after passing through the filter 14 which separates the upper chamber 16 from a sump 26 having a base 27 beneath which the return pipe 24 is connected. The return pipe 24 has the inlet of a suction pump (not shown) connected to the top thereof for pulling the filtered fluid from the sump 26 of the pan for recirculation back through the transmission (not shown).

The housing 16 has substantially vertical side walls 30 which include reinforcing ribs 32. A floor 34 in the upper chamber 16 of the housing 12 slopes toward the filter element 14 and the sump 26, so that all of the fluid within the upper chamber 16 is directed by the interior surfaces of the upper chamber toward the filter element and the sump 26. The sloping floor 34 terminates at an abrupt, substantially vertical wall 36 which forms a well portion 38 of the upper chamber 16, in which well portion the filter element 14 is seated. The seat for the filter element 14 is a land 40 which has four sloping surfaces 41, 42, 43 and 44 which slope toward the sump 26 and provide supporting surfaces for the filter 14, as well as defining an entrance 45 from the upper chamber 16 of the housing 12 to the sump 26.

The housing 12 has an axis 47 for mounting the oil pan/filter assembly 10 so that the axis is aligned with the direction of motion of the vehicle (not shown) on which the assembly is mounted. As is seen in Figures 1 and 3, the filter 14 has a pleated filter media 50 having upstream peaks and downstream peaks 51 and 52, respectively, which define peaks and valleys creating troughs 53 which extend parallel to the axis 47. The sides 54 and 55 of each trough 53 therefore act as dams to keep fluid in the troughs from shifting from one side of the filter element 14 to the other due to centrifical force as the vehicle turns.

Referring now to Figures 4-8, it is seen that the filter media 50 is rectangular and is mounted in a frame 60, wherein the frame includes a laterally extending flange arrangement 61 having front and rear lateral flanges 62 and 63, respectively, and side lateral flanges 65 and 66. The lateral flanges 62-66 each have upper surfaces which slope downwardly toward the filter media 50 and are disposed above an inlet face 67 of the filter media 50, which is defined by the plane which includes the upstream peaks 51

of the filter media pleats (an outlet face 68 being defined by the plane which includes the downstream peaks 52). The lower surfaces of the flanges 62-66 also slope toward the filter media 50 so that when the filter element 14 is nested within the well 38 of the upper chamber 16 within the housing 12, the lower surfaces abut substantially flat against the four support surfaces 41-44 of the land 40 (see Figures 1 and 3).

It is necessary to seal the ends or terminuses of the troughs 53 and this is accomplished by a front side plate 70 and a rear side plate 71 which cover and seal the ends of the troughs, as is indicated in Figures 5 and 6. This keeps the oil to be filtered in the troughs 53 and prevents the oil from running out of the ends of the troughs. Preferably, the material of the filter media 50 at the ends of the troughs 53 is embedded in the nylon plates 70 and 71 by molding the plates onto the filter media 50 when forming the frame 60. There is only a need for the front and rear plates 70 and 71, since the oil being filtered flows through the outermost side panels 72 of the filter media 50; although, it may be desirable to have side plates to provide additional stiffeners for the frame 60.

Referring now to Figures 9-11, it is seen in Figure 9 that the filter element 14 is a separate component from the housing 12 and is inserted in the housing so as to nest therein, as seen in Figure 10 (also in Figs. 1 and 3).

As is seen in Figure 10, the filter element 14 is mounted with the lateral flanges 62-66 abutting the sloping surfaces 41-44 of the land 40 so as to slope toward a drain area 80 of the sump 26. A gasket 81 is disposed between the land 40 and the lower surfaces of the laterally projecting flanges 62-66 of the filter element 14. In order to retain the filter element 14 in its nested position in the housing 12, the filter element 14 has a plurality of apertures 84 therein which receive post fasteners to provide a coupling arrangement to positively retain the filter element in place in the housing 12. The weight of the oil pressing down on the filter element, as well as suction applied to the return pipe 24, also serve to retain the filter element 14 seated against the land 40 of the housing 12.

If for some reason the filter element 14 becomes clogged, it is highly desirable to provide a bypass 26 so the fluid, whether the pan is a transmission oil pan or

lubricating oil pan, if the pan is a lubricating oil pan, continues to circulate, even though the filter would block circulation. A bypass valve 86, which is normally closed but responds to increased pressure in the upper chamber 86, is disposed between the upper chamber 16 and the sump 26.

The drain area 80, beneath the base of the sump 26, includes a plug 89 which is used for sampling transmission oil and for draining oil if oil is to be changed between filter changes.

The housing 12 is preferably molded from a composite material such as "Nylon 6®" and, in one embodiment of the invention, may have the filter element 14 affixed thereto so as to be changed and disposed of with the housing 16 which is removed by loosening bolts holding the housing to the transmission via the bolt holes 20.

In another embodiment of the invention, the filter element 14 is detachable from the housing 12 by having the filter element retained on releasable fastening posts 90 which are received in apertures 92 in the flange 62-66 of the filter element 14. With this embodiment, the housing 12 is reused and the filter element 14 is discarded or recycled.

In still another embodiment of the invention, as is set forth in Figures 12 and 13, a sump 26' is detachable from the housing 16' with the filter element 14', either integral with or readily detachable from the sump so that either the sump and filter are replaced as a unit on the filter is changed and the same sump reused. In both cases, the sump 26' has a peripheral flange 100 which is mounted on a peripheral flange 102 of the housing 16' with nuts 104 threaded on bolts 106 extending from the housing. Seals 108 are disposed between the flanges 100 and 102.

From the foregoing description, one skilled in the art can easily ascertain the essential characteristics of this invention and, without departing from the spirit and scope thereof, can make various changes and modifications of the invention to adapt it to various usages and conditions.